DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 244 066 CE 038 879

| | |
|---|---|
| TITLE | Accredited Home Study Degrees. Graduates and Employers Evaluate Their Worth. |
| INSTITUTION | National Home Study Council, Washington, D.C. |
| PUB DATE | Dec 83 |
| NOTE | 48p. |
| PUB TYPE | Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC02 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Accreditation (Institutions); *Correspondence Schools; *Correspondence Study; Educational Attitudes; *Educational Benefits; *Educational Quality; *Employer Attitudes; Graduate Surveys; National Surveys; *Outcomes of Education; Postsecondary Education; Questionnaires; Relevance (Education); Student Attitudes; Tables (Data) |
| IDENTIFIERS | Employer Surveys |

ABSTRACT

A study examined the views of employers and graduates of accredited home study programs concerning the worth of these programs. To gather data for the study, researchers mailed questionnaires to all of the 534 students who had received a degree from five home study institutions accredited by the National Home Study Council. In all, 191 graduates of the programs completed and returned questionnaires. A second survey was sent to 62 supervisors whose names were furnished by respondents to the first survey. Of these, 40 returned questionnaires. Based on the student survey, it was determined that graduates selected the home study method because it was the most convenient way for them to obtain a degree. When asked whether home study was comparable to or more difficult than regular instruction, 82 percent said yes. Over 90 percent of the graduates felt that the courses they took either have helped or will help them obtain the promotions and raises that they desire. All the employers surveyed felt that home study degree holders compare favorably to employees holding regular degrees, and 75 percent of the supervisors felt that home study degrees were just as valuable as regular degrees. (Appended to this report are the survey instruments and comments made by some of the respondents. (MN)

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ED244066

# Accredited Home Study Degrees

## Graduates and Employers Evaluate Their Worth

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Produced by the: NATIONAL HOME STUDY COUNCIL
1601 18th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009
(202) 234-5100

December 1983

The National Home Study Council, a voluntary association of accredited home study schools, was founded in 1926 to promote sound educational standards and ethical business practices within the home study field. The independent NHSC Accrediting Commission is listed by the United States Department of Education as a "nationally recognized accrediting agency." The Accrediting Commission is also a recognized member of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA).

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# Foreword

In July 1983 the National Home Study Council surveyed every graduate of every NHSC-accredited member institution who earned an academic degree by correspondence study.

The Accrediting Commission of the National Home Study Council accredited its first academic degree offered by correspondence study in January 1979. Until now, it had been too soon to attempt any significant "output evaluation" of degree-awarding institutions. Most home study degree programs offered by NHSC institutions were not launched until the mid-to-late 1970's.

The purposes of the survey were to obtain information on how NHSC degree graduates felt about their home study experience, how this home study degree had affected their careers or personal life, and how employers felt about them as individuals who had earned home study degrees.

As of July 1983 there were 534 academic degree graduates from five NHSC-accredited institutions. All of these graduates were surveyed. Adjusting for the 53 non-deliverable survey forms, there were 191 responses received, for an excellent response rate of 40%.

A follow-up survey of the supervisors of graduates (in which 65% of the surveyed supervisors responded), was conducted.

The results of these surveys certainly reflect favorably on accredited home study degrees. The attached tables of data underscore the theme that home study degrees are valuable, worthwhile credentials . . . particularly to the student and his employer. Eighty seven percent of the degrees have been at the associate level in speciality occupational areas such as electronics technology. The degrees awarded are primarily vocational ones earned by working adults.

This report provides fresh and positive testimony to the rigor, depth and worth of accredited degrees earned via correspondence study. We invite you to study the tables of data which follow to see how positively students and their employers feel about home study degrees.

Further information about this survey and the data in this report -- or about the home study field -- may be obtained by contacting the National Home Study Council, 1601 18th Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20009, 202-234-5100.

William A. Fowler
Executive Director
National Home Study Council

December 1983

# Survey Method

The National Home Study Council asked the five accredited home study institutions (see Table 1) offering academic degrees to submit a complete list of the names and addresses of every individual who had received a degree from their institution.

In all, 534 names were submitted. In July 1983, a mail survey questionnaire (see Appendix I) was mailed to each of the names. A postage-paid return envelope was included. A total of 191 responses were returned to the National Home Study Council. Fifty three envelopes were returned marked "undeliverable." The response rate was 40%, considered excellent in mail surveys of this type, since there were no follow-up mailings to non-respondents.

A second survey of the graduates' job supervisors (62 respondents supplied the name and address of their supervisor) was conducted. The survey letter which was mailed to supervisors is shown at Appendix II. Forty (or 65%) of the supervisors responded to this survey.

# Executive Summary

## Graduate Survey Results

According to the results of the 1983 survey of 534 (40% responded) graduates of academic degree programs offered by accredited NHSC member institutions, the following emerged:

1. Some 87% of the degrees awarded were at the Associate degree level; it took an average 3.4 years to earn an Associate degree. Tables 2 and 3.

2. Graduates had selected the home study method because it was the most convenient way for them (75%); respondents also said the number one strong point of the method was the flexibility of studying at one's own pace (40%). Tables 5 and 20.

3. 73% of the respondents said that their goals had been achieved since earning their degree; 14% weren't sure. Table 6.

4. 82% of the respondents said that home study was comparable to, or more difficult than resident class instruction. Table 7.

5. 97% felt that their degree programs provided the knowledge, skills and education they were seeking. Table 8.

6. 91% of the graduates felt that they had -- or will have -- the job or salary increase they were seeking as a result of earning their degree. 41% reported already having an increase in income. Tables 10 and 13.

7. 92% said they felt home study was worth the effort required. Table 11.

8. The primary goals (73%) for seeking a degree were career/job related. Table 15.

9. 87% of the graduates felt their home study degrees were as valuable or more valuable than a resident school degree. Table 16.

10. 96% said they were satisfied with their school's programs and services; 90% would recommend the school to a friend. Tables 17 and 18.

## Supervisor Survey Results

In a separate survey (n=40) of the graduates' supervisors (32% elected to have their supervisors surveyed by NHSC; 65% of the supervisors responded), the following emerged:

1. 100% of the supervisors felt that the degree graduate they supervised compared favorably in knowledge with subordinates with resident degrees.

2. 100% of the supervisors felt the home study degree graduate performed better on the job as a result of his or her degree;

3. 100% of the supervisors: (a) would hire another person with a home study degree as a credential; (b) would encourage others to earn home study degrees;

4. 75% of the supervisors felt that home study degrees were just as valuable or more valuable than a resident school degree.

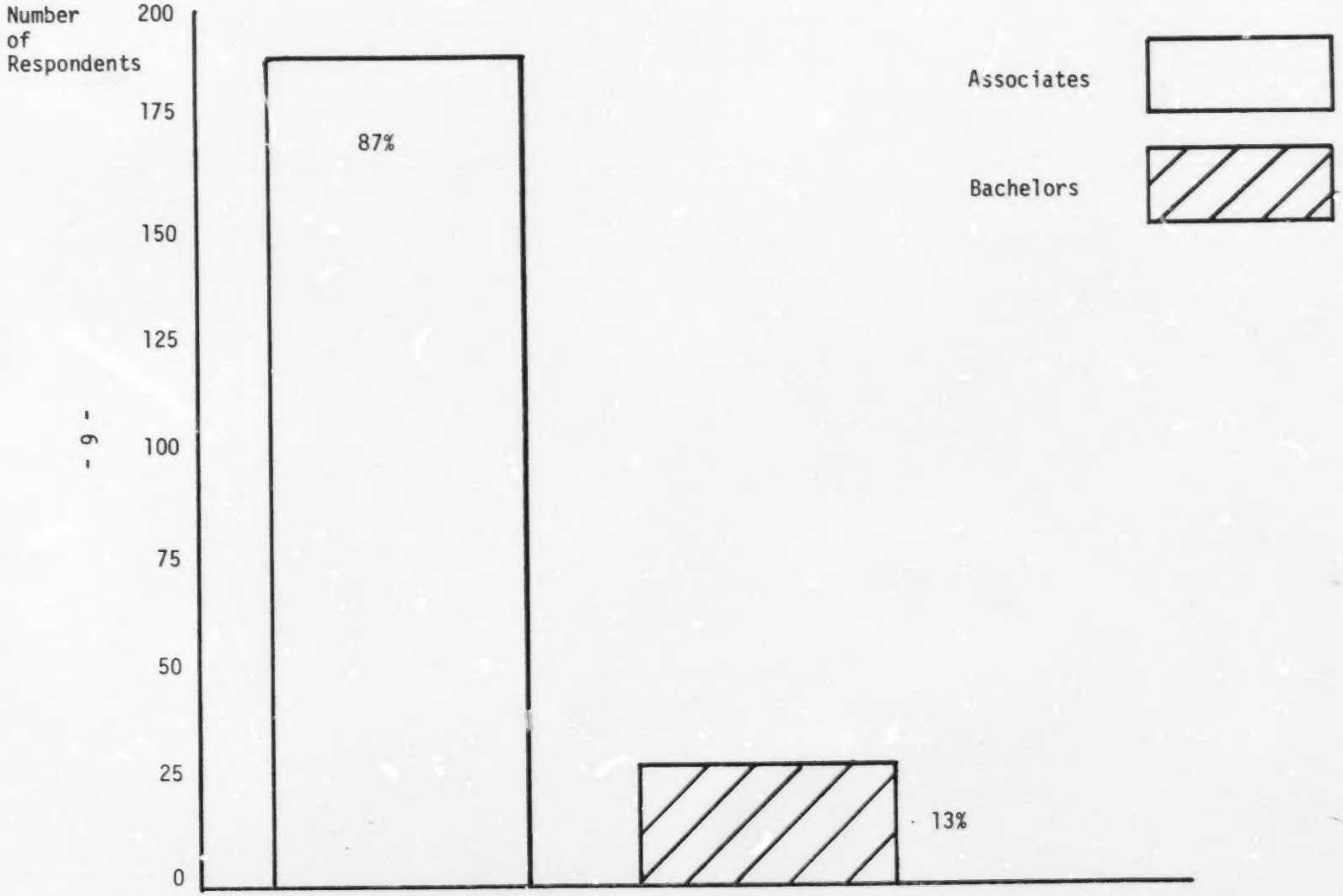
Overall, the graduates themselves expressed great satisfaction with their experiences in learning by correspondence. They appreciated the discipline and self-motivation the home study method required. They were highly positive about the convenience and flexibility of the method -- particularly for working adults. The graduates' supervisors echoed the praise for home study: they cited as praiseworthy the maturity and discipline that characterize the typical employee who is also a home study student.

## 1. Response Rates by Institution

| Institution | Surveys Mailed | Responses Received | Response Rate (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| California College for Respiratory Therapy | 4 | 3 | 75 |
| Cleveland Institute of Electronics | 32 | 24 | 75 |
| Grantham College of Engineering | 139 | 32 | 23 |
| International Correspondence Institute | 24 | 9 | 37 |
| ICS Center for Degree Studies | 335 | 123 | 36 |
| TOTALS | 534 | 191 | 40%* |

* 40% response rate. 53 of the surveys were returned marked "undeliverable." Thus, only 481 responses were presumably received.

## 2. Which home study degree did you earn?



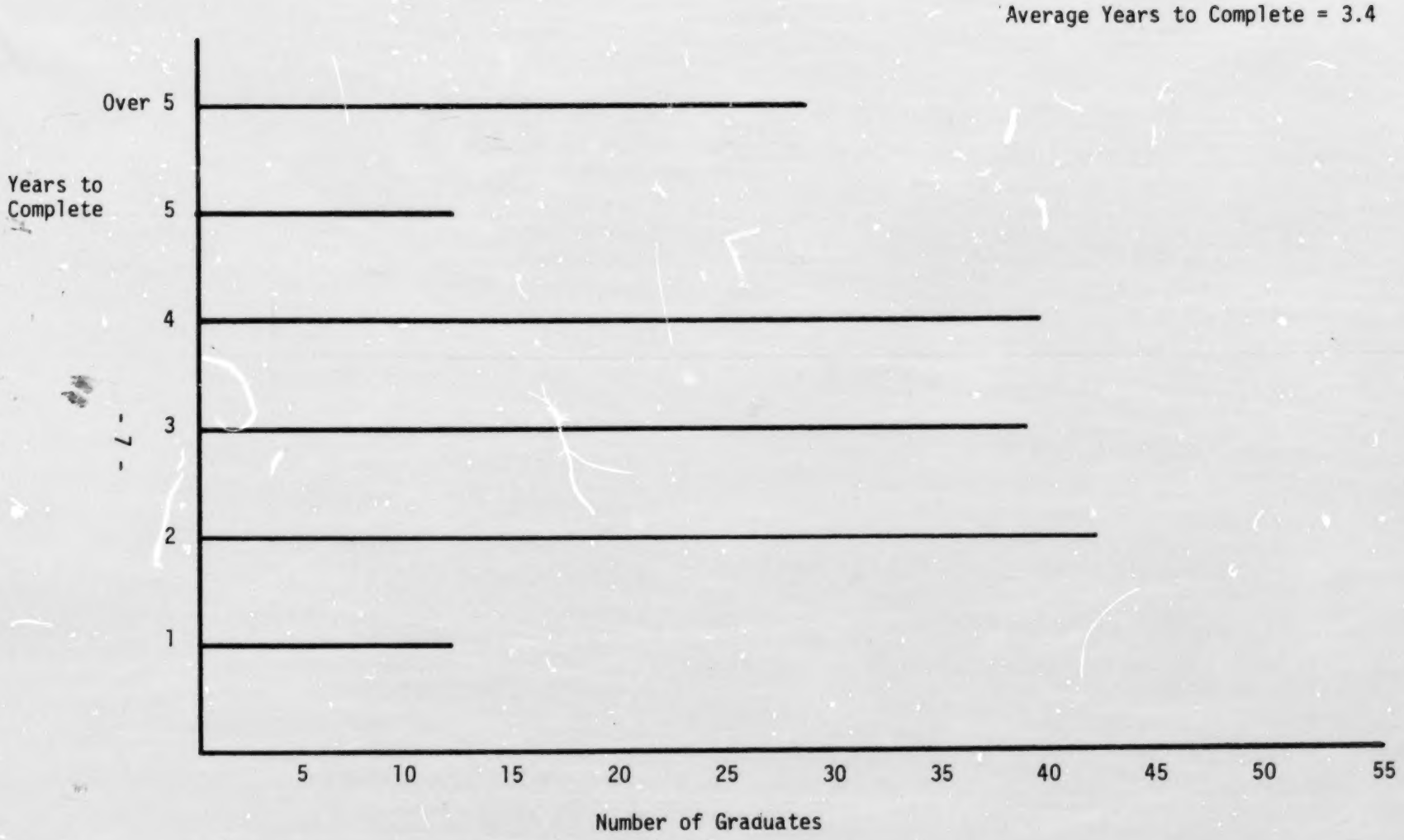




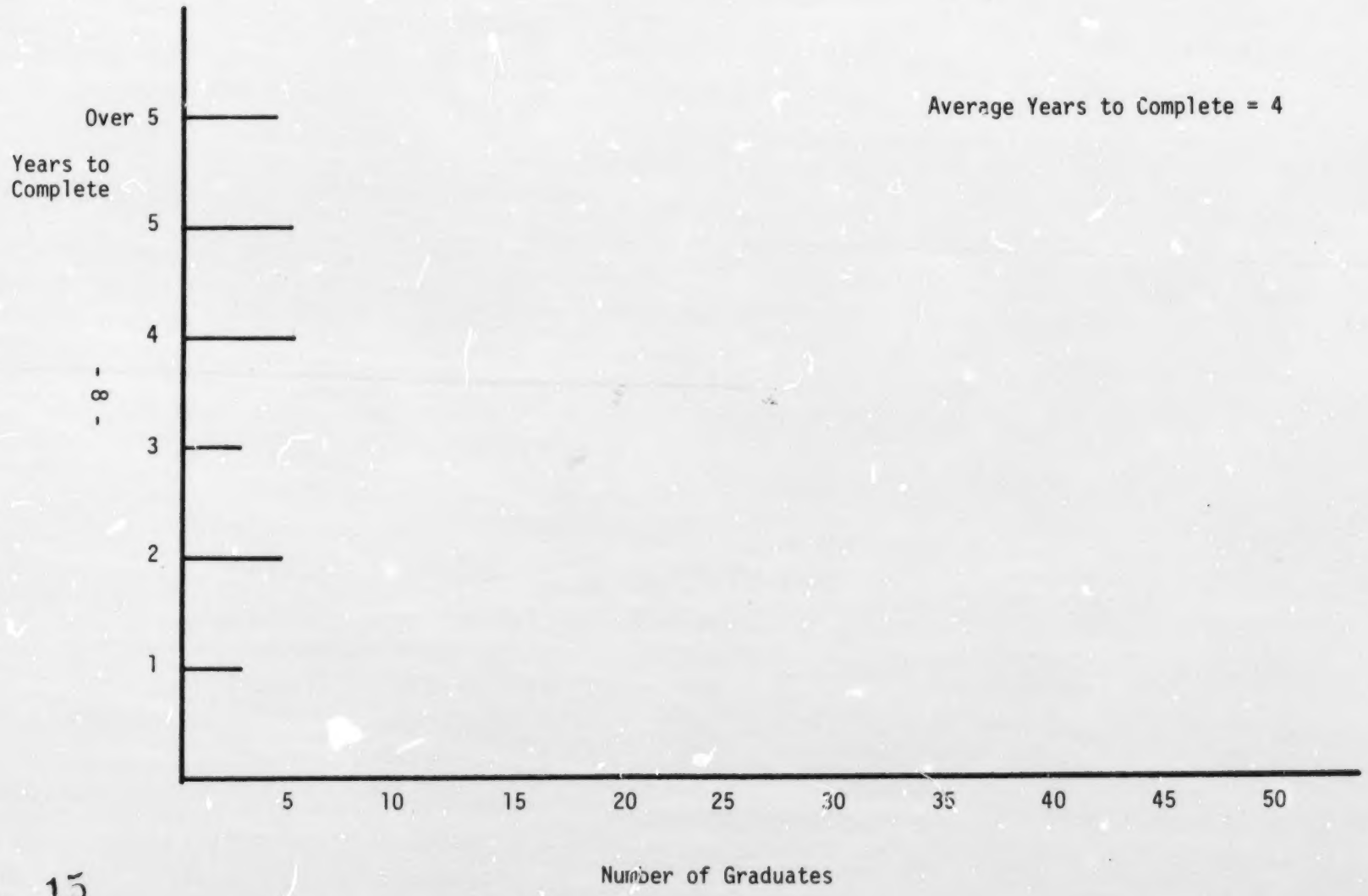



Of the 213 home study degrees earned by students, 87% were at the Associate's degree level.

## 3. Associate Degree Programs: Years to Complete



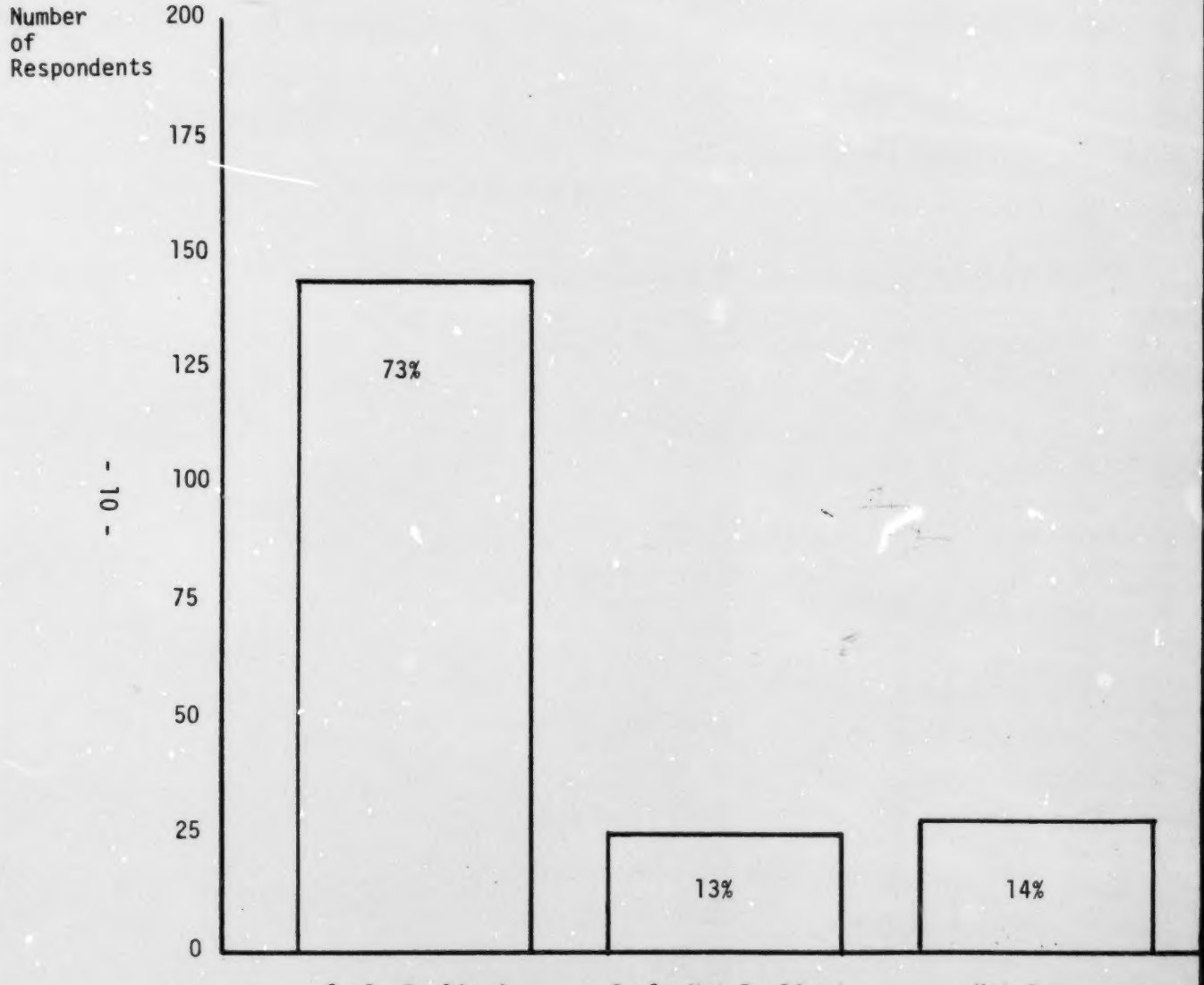
## 4. Bachelors Degree Programs: Years to Complete



**5. Why did you elect to study by the home study method?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | It was the most convenient way: | 75% | (144 respondents) |
| 2. | It was the only course/method available: | 8% | (15 respondents) |
| 3. | The tuition was reasonable: | 3% | (6 respondents) |
| 4. | Other reasons: | 14% | (26 respondents) |

**6. Do you feel that since earning your degree your goals have been realized?**



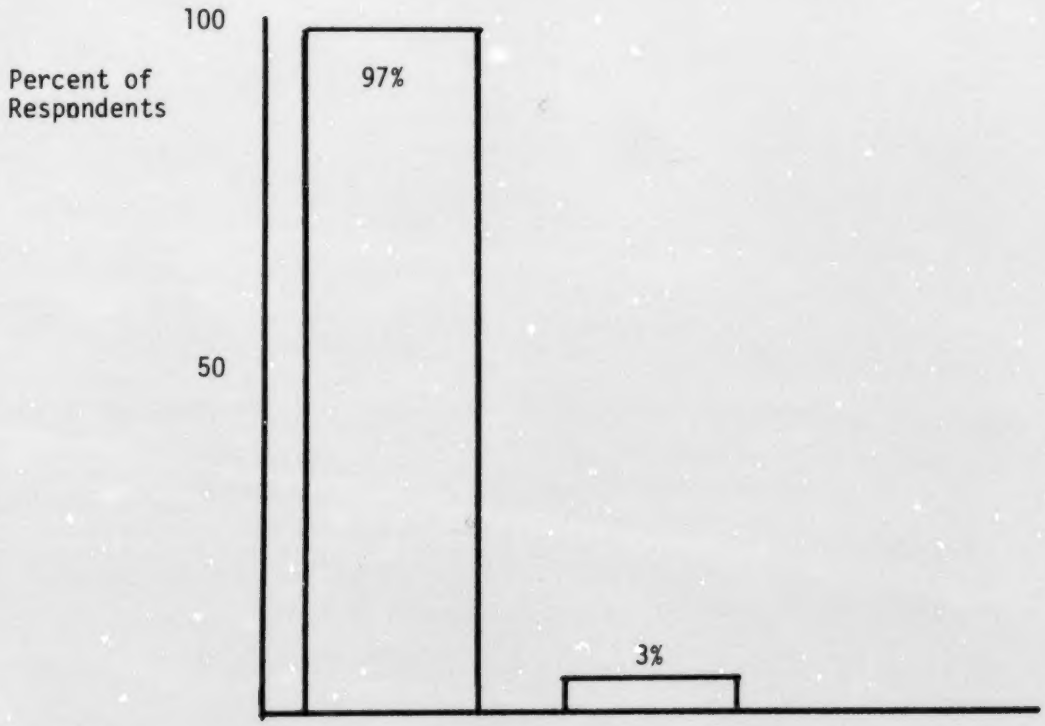

Of those responding, 73% felt they had realized their goals.

7. **Compared to classroom education, how do you feel about the level of difficulty of your home study degree program?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Home study was less difficult: | 14% | (28 respondents) |
| 2. Home study was comparable: | 45% | (94 respondents) |
| 3. Home study was more difficult: | 37% | (67 respondents) |
| 4. Unable to compare the two: | 4% | (8 respondents) |

**8. To what exent do you feel your home study degree program provided the knowledge, skills, and education you were seeking?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Superior: | 36% | (71 respondents) |
| 2. Adequate: | 61% | (119 respondents) |
| 3. Inadequate: | 2% | (4 respondents) |
| 4. Very Inadequate: | 1% | (3 respondents) |




Students receiving knowledge, skills, and education they sought.

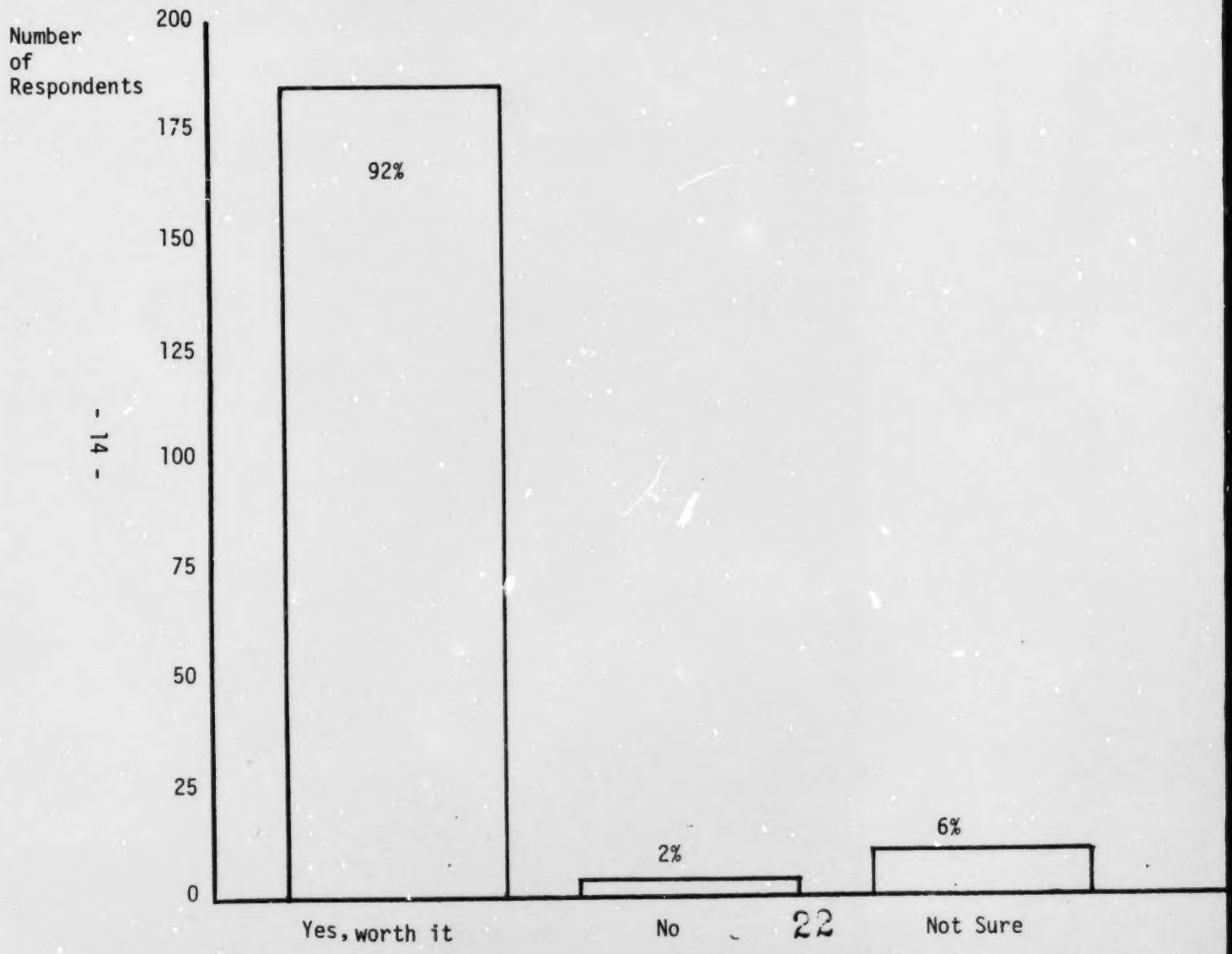
9. **Were you seeking a new job, job promotion or salary increase as a result of your home study degree ?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Yes | 64% | (124 respondents) |
| 2. | No | 36% | (71 respondents) |

10. **If so, did your degree satisfy your objectives?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Yes, goal was reached: | 51% | (66 respondents) |
| 2. | Not yet, but think it will be: | 40% | (52 respondents) |
| 3. | Not yet, doubt if it will be: | 7% | (9 respondents) |
| 4. | No, goal was never reached: | 2% | (3 respondents) |

## 11. Was home study worth the effort?




Over 92% of the degree holders felt their programs were worth the effort required.

12. **Were you successful in getting acceptance or transfer credit?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Yes | 31% | (58 respondents) |
| 2. No | 9% | (17 respondents) |
| 3. Did not try to transfer work | 60% | (114 respondents) |

13. **Have you had an increase in income due to earning your degree?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Yes | 41% | (79 respondents) |
| 2. No | 59% | (115 respondents) |

**14. Which benefit do you feel has been the most impcrtant to you?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | The satisfaction of having the degree: | 21% | (42 respondents) |
| 2. | Having a degree as a credential towards job opportunities I might not otherwise have had: | 47% | (92 respondents) |
| 3. | The enjoyment and experience of learning on my own: | 12% | (23 respondents) |
| 4. | Being more skilled and better at performing my work: | 18% | (35 respondents) |
| 5. | I do not feel I have benefitted from this degree: | 2% | (5 respondents) |

**15. Which of the following was the primary goal you had when enrolling in the degree program?**

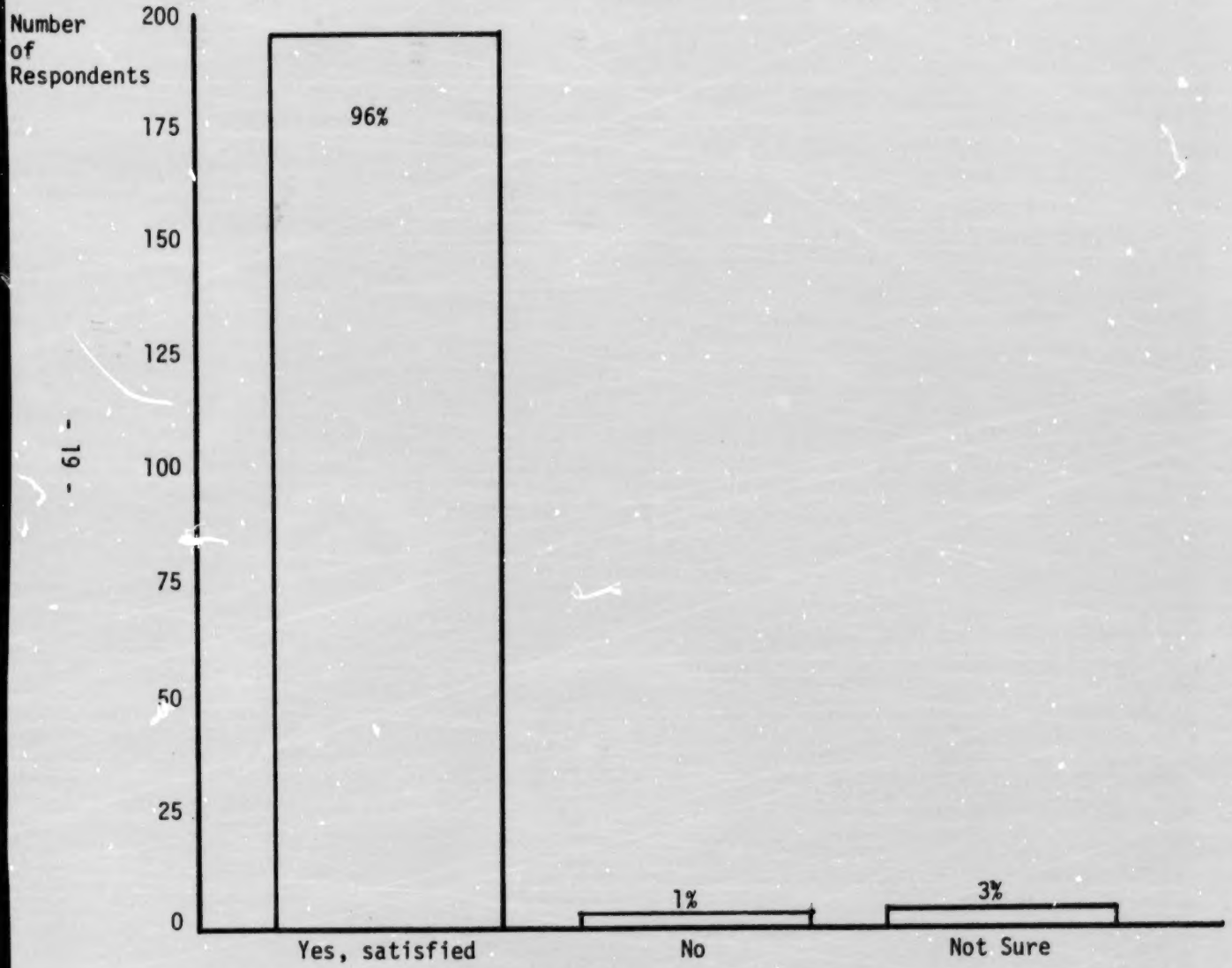
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. To improve my chances of good pay and/or promotion in my career: | 29% | (57 respondents) |
| 2. To obtain the credential which would make me eligible to receive the right pay for the work I am (was) doing: | 7% | (14 respondents) |
| 3. To develop a new career/job: | 10% | (19 respondents) |
| 4. To qualify for a professional license: | 5% | (10 respondents) |
| 5. To improve my job skills and my ability to perform my work: | 22% | (43 repsondents) |
| 6. To learn more about the subject area simply because I was interested in it: | 9% | (19 respondents) |
| 7. To have the satisfaction of having the degree: | 8% | (16 respondents) |
| 8. To obtain prerequisites for entry into a higher degree program: | 10% | (21 respondents) |

In the above question, 73% of the responses related to job/career concerns.

**16. How would the following people rate your home study degree in comparison with other resident school degrees?**

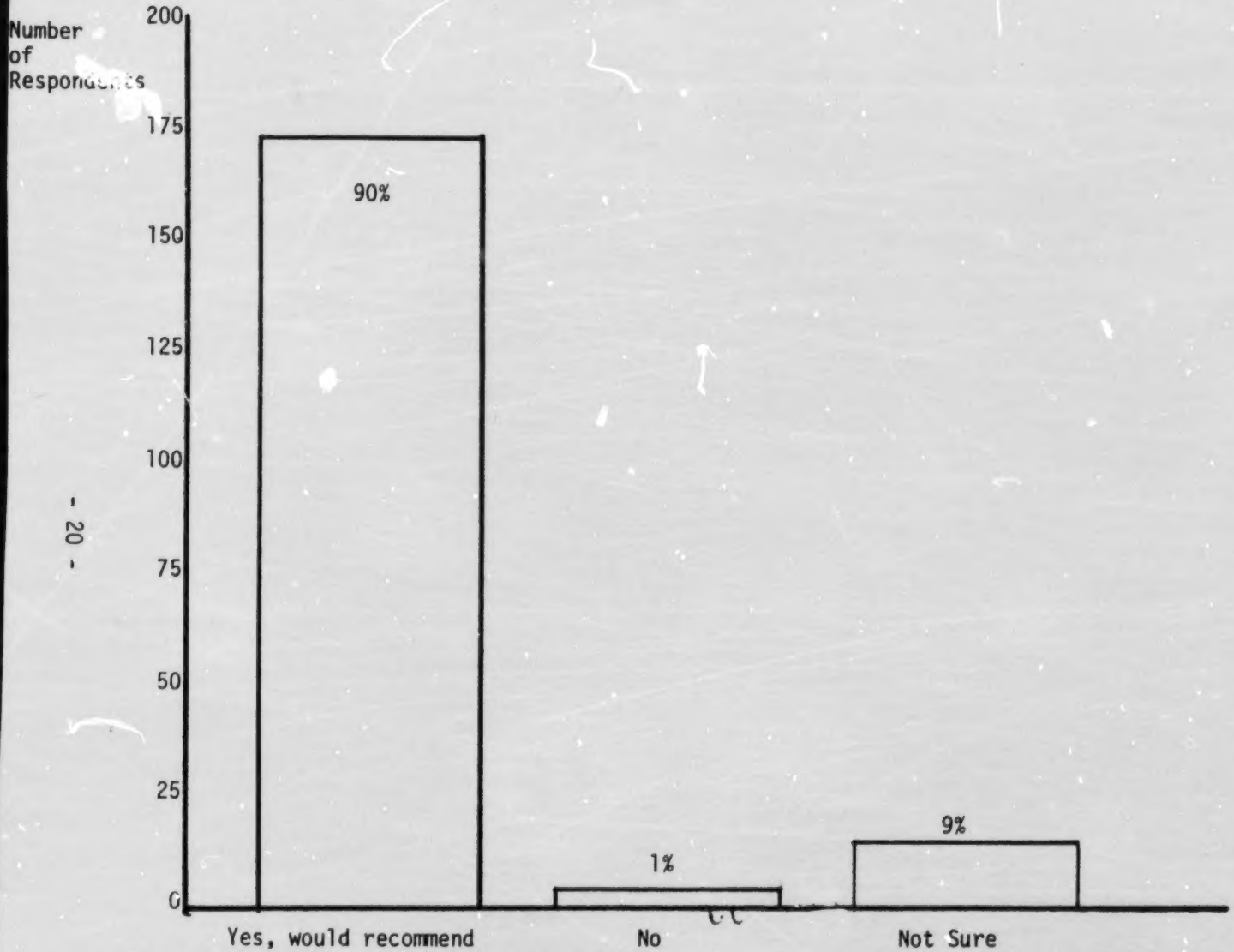
| | More Valuable | Just as Valuable | Less Valuable | Don't Know | Doesn't Apply |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Your present (or most recent) employer | 8% | 48% | 23% | 11% | 10% |
| 2. Your present (or most recent) co-workers | 7% | 50% | 20% | 14% | 9% |
| 3. Your spouse (if applicable) | 16% | 58% | 6% | 5% | 15% |
| 4. Your relatives (parents, other family) | 13% | 57% | 12% | 14% | 4% |
| 5. Your friends | 6% | 54% | 18% | 17% | 5% |
| 6. And how do you rate this degree | 25% | 62% | 12% | 1% | 0% |

**17. Were you satisfied with the school's program and services?**




Overwhelming, home study degree holders were satisfied with their services and programs.

**18. Would you recommend this program to a friend?**



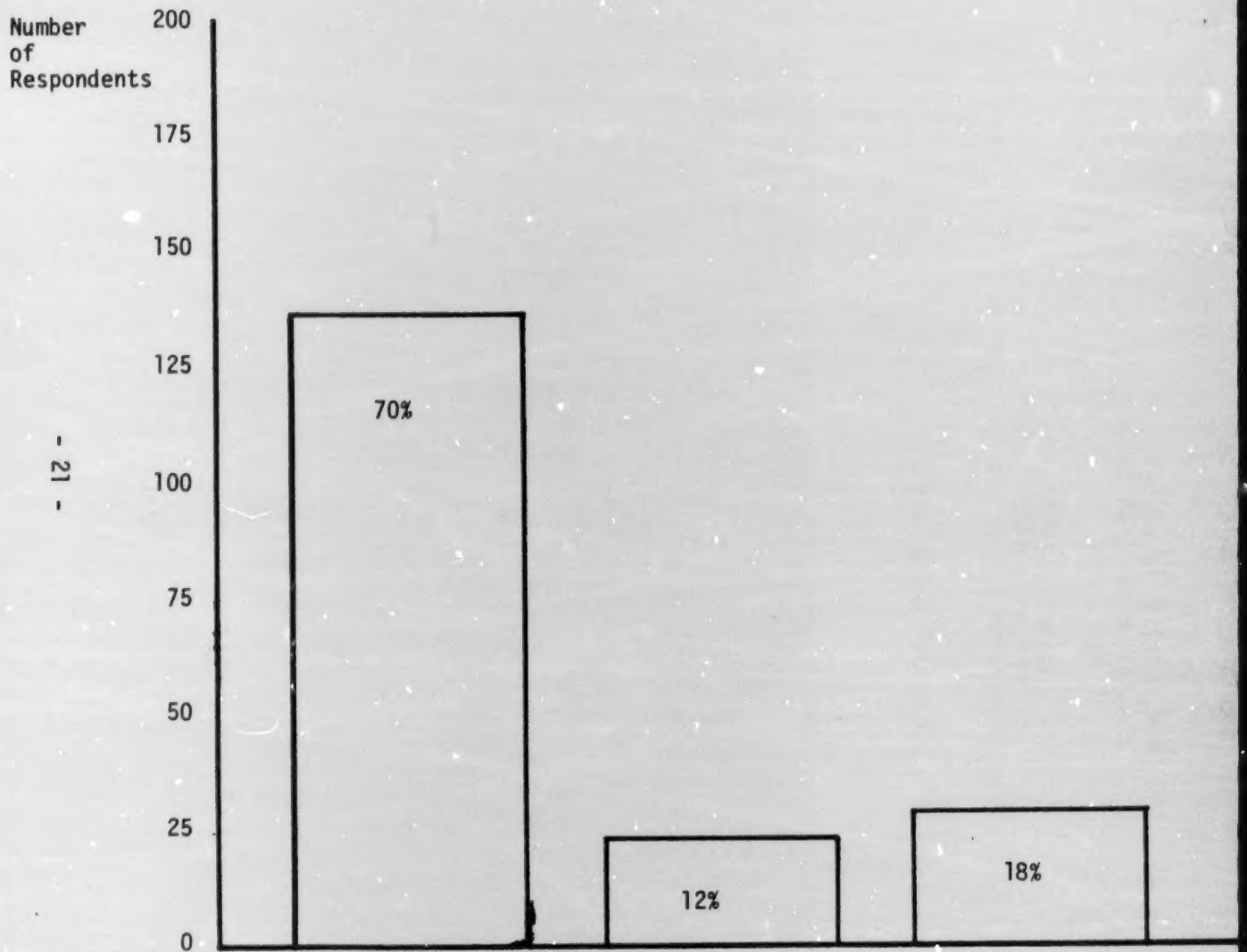



28

Degree holders who responded to the survey were consistent in feeling positive about their programs.

28A

**19. Would you enroll in an advanced home study degree program?**




Some 70% said they would enroll in an advanced home study degree program.

## 20. Respondent's list of strong points of the correspondence method

| | Percent of Comments |
|---|---|
| A. Could study at one's own pace/time schedule | 40% |
| B. Method instilled self-discipline and confidence | 22% |
| C. Course materials were well designed and subjects readily understood | 17% |
| D. All other strong points | 3% |

(191 total responses)

## 21. Respondent's list of weak points of the correspondence method

| | Percent of Comments |
|---|---|
| A. Experienced delays in getting materials or instructor feedback | 29% |
| B. Missed the personal interaction with instructors/students in a classroom | 17% |
| C. Critical of course materials, coverage of subject | 10% |
| D. Regretted that other institutions wouldn't accept degree/credits for transfer | 6% |
| E. All other weak points | 6% |

(191 total responses)

22. **May we survey your present supervisor to obtain his or her opinion on your home study degree?**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Yes | 32% | (62 respondents) |
| 2. | No | 68% | (130 respondents) |

## Tables

## Results of Employer Survey

### 1A. How long have you known this person?

Average Number of Years: 6

### 2A. Did you know this person had a home study degree?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 90% | (36 respondents) |
| No | 10% | (4 respondents) |

### 3A. Does this person compare favorably in terms of knowledge with someone with a resident degree?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 100% | (37 respondents) |

## Tables

**4A. Does this person perform better because of the degree?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 100% | (37 respondents) |

**5A. Would you hire another person who has a home study degree?**

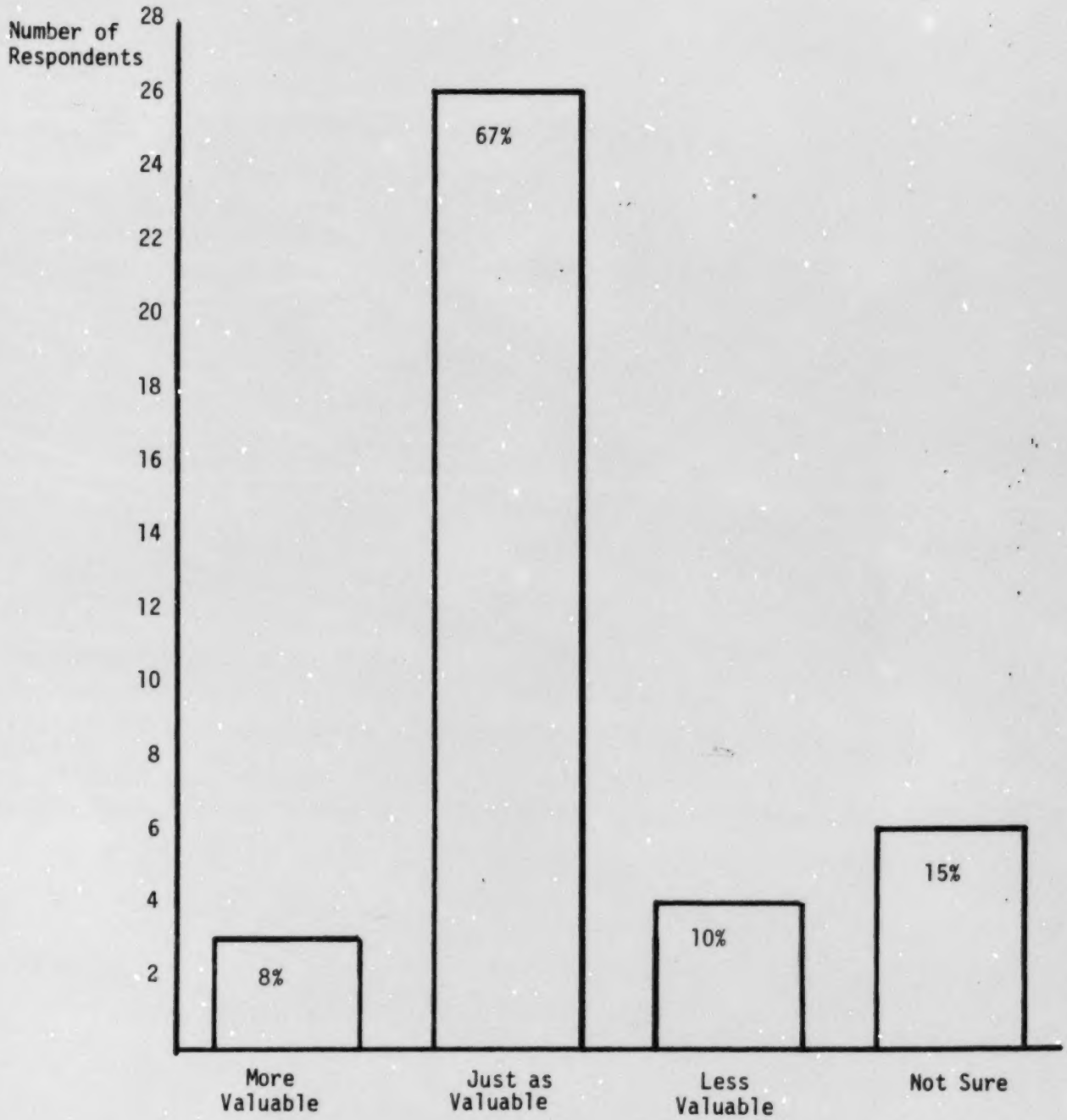
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 100% | (39 respondents) |

**6A. Would you encourage others to earn a home study degree?**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 100% | (39 respondents) |
| No | 1% | (1 respondent) |

## Table

**7A. How do you rate the value of this person's degree compared to a resident school degree?**



APPENDIX I

# Graduate Review

National Home Study Council, 1601 18th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. (The nationally recognized non-profit association of accredited home study schools.)

The National Home Study Council is studying the value and effectiveness of academic degrees by correspondence/independent study offered by its member institutions. The Council's aim is to secure greater public acceptance and national recognition of such degrees offered by its accredited member schools. As a degree holder, you can help the Council present a case for greater acceptance. Please answer all the questions below and return this survey to NHSC in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. Thank you for your help on this vital project.

Your Name (optional): _____
(please print)

Your age: _____ Today's Date: _____

Name of home study school you studied with: _____

# Survey Questions

1. What academic degree did you earn from this institution? _____

_____

2. How many years did it take you to earn your degree? _____ years

3. What was your chief goal in studying this degree program? _____

_____

4. Why did you elect to study by the home study method? _____

_____

Response

5. Do you feel that since earning your degree your goals have been realized? _____

   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Not sure

6. Compared to other classroom education you have had, how do you feel about the level of difficulty and the challenge of your home study degree program? _____

   a. home study was less difficult
   b. home study was comparable
   c. home study was more difficult
   d. am unable to compare the two

7. To what extent do you feel your home study degree program provided the knowledge, skills, and education you were seeking? _____

   a. superior
   b. adequate
   c. inadequate
   d. very inadequate

Response

8. Were you seeking a new job, job promotion or salary increase as a result of your home study degree? _____

   a. Yes
   b. No

9. If you answered yes to question 7 above, did your degree program completion satisfy your objective of a new job, promotion or salary increase? _____

   a. Yes, goal reached
   b. Not yet, but think it will
   c. Not yet, doubt if it will
   d. No, goal never reached

10. Was studying your degree by home study/correspondence worth the effort required? _____

    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Not sure

11. If you have tried to have your degree work accepted by other academic institutions, were you successful in getting acceptance or transfer credit? _____

    a. Yes
    b. No. Why not? _____
    c. Did not try to transfer work

12. Have you had an increase in income due to earning your degree? _____

    a. Yes
    b. No

Response

13. Of all the ways you may have benefitted from obtaining this degree, which one do you feel has been the most important to you (choose only one). ____

a. The satisfaction of having the degree
b. Having a degree as a credential towards job opportunities I might not otherwise have had
c. The enjoyment and experience of learning on my own
e. Being more skilled and better at performing my work
f. I do not feel I have benefitted from this degree.

14. Which, if any, of the following goals was the primary goal you had when enrolling in this degree program? (Choose only one) ____

a. To improve my chances of good pay and/or promotion in my career
b. To obtain the credential which would make me eligible to receive the right pay for the work I already was (am) doing.
c. To develop a new career/job
d. To qualify for a professional license
e. To improve my job skills and my ability to perfom my work
f. To learn more about the subject area simply because I was interested in it
g. To have the satisfaction of having the degree
h. To obtain prerequisites for entry into a higher degree program (e.g., Bachelors, Masters, etc.)

15. How do you think the following people would rate your home study degree in comparison with <u>other</u> resident school degrees in the same subject/field? (Check one box for each line)

| | More Valuable | Just as Valuable | Less Valuable | Don't Know | Doesn't Apply |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Your present (or most recent) employer | | | | | |
| b. Your present (or most recent) co-workers | | | | | |
| c. Your spouse (if applicable) | | | | | |
| d. Your relatives (parents, other family) | | | | | |
| e. Your friends | | | | | |
| f. And how do you rate this degree? | | | | | |

Response

16. All things considered, were you satisfied with your degree program and the instructional services offered by your school? _____

    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Not sure

17. Would you recommend this home study degree program to a friend? _____

    a. Yes
    b. Nc
    c. Not sure

18. Would you enroll in an advanced degree program offered by home study? _____

    a. Yes. Which subject? _____
    b. No
    c. Not sure

19. List any strong points of the correspondence method you experienced:

_____

20. List any weak points of the correspondence method your experienced:

_____

_____

_____

_____

21. Do you have any other comments on your school, program or the correspondence method of learning?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Response

22. May we survey by mail your present supervisor to obtain his or her opinion on your home study degree? ____

a. Yes
b. No

23. If yes, please print below the name, title, and full address of the person in your organization to whom we should write:

_____
Name Title

_____
Address

_____
City State Zip

Thank you for helping with this important project. Mail your survey to the National Home Study Council in the enclosed postage paid envelope.

William A. Fowler
Executive Director

NATIONAL HOME STUDY COUNCIL
1601-18th STREET, N.W. • WASHINGTON, D. C. 20009 • 202-234-5100

APPENDIX II

Office of the Executive Director

November 8, 1983

Mr. Joe Doe
XYZ Corporation
9999 Washington Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 20876

Dear Mr. Doe:

The National Home Study Council is studying the value and effectiveness of academic degrees earned by students who have studied by the correspondence/independent study method with institutions accredited by the Council's Accrediting Commission. As the employer of an individual who has such a degree, we are writing to seek your opinion.

Robert School has given us your name so that we could send you this survey. Won't you please answer the questions on the other side of this letter and return it to us in the enclosed postage paid envelope?

We value your opinion and appreciate your cooperation. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

William A. Fowler

dm



*The nationally recognized professional association of home study schools—a nonprofit public service organization.*

SURVEY

1. Your Name: _____ Title: _____

2. How long have you known the person named on the other side of this letter?

   Years _____

3. Before receiving this letter did you know that this person has an academic degree earned by correspondence or independent study? Yes No

4. Compared to others you know with "resident" degrees of a comparable nature, does this person compare favorably in terms of equivalent knowledge, skills, and attitudes? Yes No

5. Do you feel that this person performs better on the job because of the degree? Yes No

6. Are you favorably inclined toward hiring or supervising other employees who have earned their degrees by correspondence study? Yes No

7. Would you encourage others to enroll in accredited home study degree programs to increase their job competence? Yes No

8. From your viewpoint as a supervisor, how do you rate the value of this person's academic degree by correspondence as compared to resident school degrees in the same field?

   A. More valuable
   B. Just as valuable
   C. Less valuable
   D. Not sure

9. Are there comments you would like to share? _____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX III

## Selected Comments from Home Study Degree Graduates

Question 21 asked for "other comments" from the graduates. The comments below are but a few selected from various survey forms received. They are felt to be representative in their basic content of all of the 191 responses received:

"For me this method was ideal. I had attended a resident college. I appreciated this method much more."

-- Business Degree Holder

"You actually have to work harder because you're on your own."

-- Accounting Degree Holder

"Everything is good except NHSC accreditation is not recognized. People only seem to go for regional accreditation."

-- Business Degree Holder

"I feel that the NHSC has been instrumental in upgrading this type of instruction. Keep up the good work!"

-- Electronics Degree Holder

"I look at it as a great learning experience, with a lot of fairness involved when it comes to evaluating student's work. For correspondence degrees to be recognized, there must be more acceptance of it from the academic community."

-- Electronics Degree Holder

"For the given subject (electronics) I think it is the best way to learn. The school was great."

-- Electronics Degree Holder

"The course materials will be invaluable throughout my career."

-- Electronics Degree Holder

"Having attended classroom instruction, I believe my home studies required more self-effort and resulted in greater learning."

-- Theology Degree Holder

"If I had any questions, my instructors were most helpful."

-- Respiratory Therapy
Degree Holder

"It was a fantastic challenge for anyone without the time to go to a conventional school."

-- Accounting Degree Holder

"It was the best way I ever experienced learning. I developed motivation, self-reliance in solving problems and good time management."

-- Civil Engineering Degree
Holder

"It's a good program. I wish more colleges would accept the credits earned through home study. It's the only reason I'm not sure I would enroll in another home study degree program."

-- Accounting Degree Holder

"Outstanding. I am at a loss in making any recommendations for improvement."

-- Electronics Degree Holder

"My school is a first rate institution that cares about its students' progress even well beyond graduation."

-- Civil Engineering Degree
Holder

"It's like on-the-job training. You study your lesson at night and apply it during the day. It works."

-- Mechanical Engineer
Degree Holder

"I thought it was great -- and well worth the time and money! I got a lot of satisfaction from completing the assignments daily."

-- Accounting Degree Holder

APPENDIX IV

## Selected Comments from Supervisors of Home Study Degree Holders

Question 9 of the survey form mailed to supervisors of graduates asked "Are there comments you would like to share?" Below is a representative selection of comments received from supervisors:

"The educational opportunities are important. So is the value of the individual enrolled in any program."

-- School Superintendent

"The type of person who elects to take correspondence study seems to be more highly motivated than others."

-- County Engineer

"John is the kind of person who constantly updates his knowledge. He has gotten a lot from his course. It relates directly to the kind of problems he faces daily at work."

-- Maintenance Supervisor

"The dedication needed to achieve a degree program via correspondence is very great. That's why I believe it is more valuable compared to a similar resident degree."

-- Telephone Company Manager

"I believe the degree to be less valuable because I know Ed is having trouble finding a way to use it towards a bachelors degree."

-- Maintenance Supervisor

"His degree may be more valuable due to previous job experience . . . [the course] gave information and immediate areas of application of knowledge achieved, especially in Math."

-- Chief Engineer

"Since I myself have completed a Master's at night school and have taken correspondence courses at home, I know the time they take and the dedication required to complete them."

-- Manager, Quality Control